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SUBJECT: MICHELETTI SAYS HE WON'T STEP DOWN BEFORE  
INAUGURATION

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 00038

¶1. (U) Summary. Supporters of de facto regime leader Roberto Micheletti have been staging ceremonies in recent days to honor Micheletti. The largest was a January 18 rally organized by the pro-regime civil society organization Civic Democratic Union (UCD). During the speech he delivered at the rally, Micheletti said unequivocally that he will not relinquish power before the January 27 inauguration of president-elect Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo and criticized the international community for abandoning Honduras for seven months. In an interview published in the January 19 edition of the "El Herald" newspaper, Micheletti said stepping aside before January 27 would be tantamount to admitting that the actions of June 28 were a mistake. End Summary.

¶2. (U) As the January 27 inauguration of president-elect Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo approaches, supporters of de facto regime leader Roberto Micheletti are publicly manifesting their appreciation to Micheletti. A road in San Pedro Sula, the country's second largest city, has been named after him. The National Association of Industrialists (ANDI) presented him with a plaque on January 11 hailing him as the "First National Hero of the Twenty-first Century." The National Congress on January 13 made him a life-long member (reftel). A group of business associations of northern Honduras held a gala on January 15 at which they proclaimed him "Defender of the Constitution and the Republic."

¶3. (U) The largest show of support for Micheletti was a televised rally held on January 18 that was organized by the pro-regime civil society organization, Civic Democratic Union (UCD), led by Arminda Lopez Contreras, wife of de facto regime foreign minister Carlos Lopez Contreras. The rally, attended by approximately 500 persons, was held at a public square named Democracy Square that is located next to the Office of the President. Micheletti supporters, dressed in the white clothing that became the uniform of pro-regime demonstrators following the June 28 coup and holding banners praising Micheletti and Honduran flags, chanted "Micheletti" and "thank you." Arminda Lopez Contreras, who referred to Micheletti as the "constitutional president of Honduras," called on Hondurans to support president-elect Lobo while noting that the UCD would be watching his actions.

¶4. (SBU) Micheletti, accompanied by the de facto Cabinet and the Armed Forces chiefs of staff, delivered a nationalistic and bombastic speech in which he criticized the international community for abandoning Honduras for seven months and declared he would not relinquish power before Lobo's January 27 inauguration. Micheletti said no outside force could

bring Honduras to its knees and urged Hondurans not to let down their guard. Micheletti called on Hondurans to support the administration of president-elect Lobo, noting that the government needed to address the needs of all Hondurans. Micheletti, while telling Hondurans to move forward, could not avoid criticizing the government of President Jose Manuel "Mel" Zelaya. He told his countrymen to leave behind the sadness felt during three years of government by men and women who today have fled from Honduras and to leave behind the bad taste of a bad government that destroyed the hopes of a united people. Micheletti stated that it is not known how funding that was earmarked for poverty reduction was spent by the Zelaya administration. Micheletti, whose regime has not been recognized by a single nation, described Zelaya's government as one that caused other countries to lose faith in Honduras. Micheletti asserted that God is Honduran because he did not allow the bombs detonated by leftists and the calls for action from the Brazilian Embassy and by corrupt media organs to intimidate the Honduran people. At the end of his speech, Micheletti said that on January 27 he would take off his jacket and tie, while proceeding to actually do so, and would become just another Honduran and then draped himself in a Honduran flag, ending his speech with his trademark "Long live Honduras, long live Honduras, and long live Honduras."

15. (U) In an interview published in the January 19 edition of the "El Heraldo" newspaper, Micheletti stated that the country took precedence over any Honduran or foreign interest. He said relinquishing power before January 27 would be to give in to pressure from the international community and admit that the events of June 28 were a

TEGUCIGALP 00000051 002 OF 002

mistake. They were not a mistake, said Micheletti, but a constitutional succession carried out in accordance with the country's constitution and laws. Micheletti accused Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary-General Jose Miguel Insulza of supporting President Zelaya by sending a delegation to observe the poll Zelaya planned to hold on June 28 asking Hondurans if they supported holding a referendum on having a constituent assembly. Micheletti also called Insulza a lackey of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA). In response to the question of where Honduras would be today if regime supporters had not taken action on June 28, Micheletti responded that a dictator would be in office in the company of a group of people depriving Hondurans of their rights and of their property. Micheletti also said combating narcotics was one of the country's challenges and said Honduras utilized radar provided by the U.S. to counter drug traffickers until it was shut off after June 28. (Note: The U.S. continued to provide radar data to Honduras after June 28, at first only to the police forces and not the military, but later to a joint task force run by the police but attended by military officials. End Note.)

16. (U) During his speech at the UCD rally, Micheletti thanked former Presidents Rafael Leonardo Callejas and Ricardo Maduro for their support. According to press reports, president-elect Lobo stated on January 15 that he will form a council of all former living Honduran presidents, including Zelaya and Micheletti, to provide him with advice.

17. (SBU) Comment: Micheletti, surrounded by sycophants, appears convinced that he is a national hero. However, the low turnout at his UCD rally reflects the fact that his base, while fervent, is small. This series of tributes to him does nothing to repair the political schism formed by the events of the last year. It is interesting that Lobo included Zelaya and Micheletti in the roster of former presidents. While meant to demonstrate Lobo's desire for reconciliation, it is hard to envision such a body meeting together in one room with both Zelaya and Micheletti as members. End Comment.  
HENSHAW